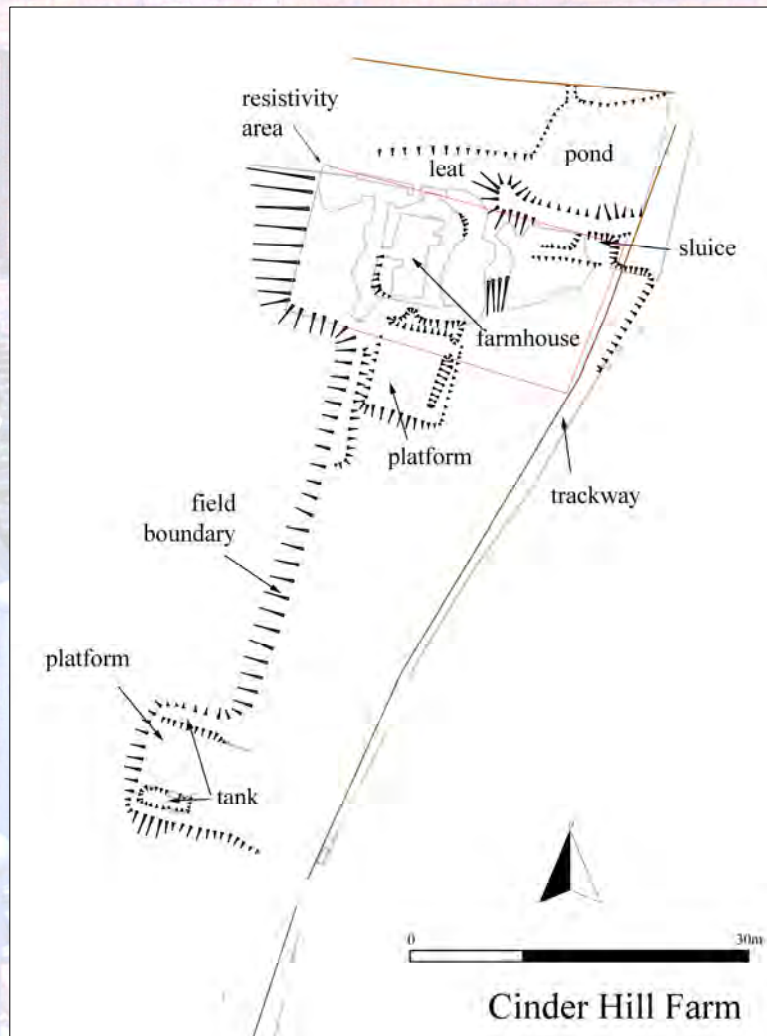


Holcombe Moor Training Area, Bury

An Archaeological Survey of a relict Industrial Landscape



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Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological survey of five sites at the Holcombe Moor Training Area, Bury, Greater Manchester (centred SD 76 16) commissioned by the Historic Environment Advisor (Archaeology) for the Defence estates, MOD. The survey work was undertaken between September 2007 and January 2009 and comprised resistivity survey work over Cinder Hill Farm and Cinder Hill Factory, earthwork surveys of the remains at Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill, Cinder Hill Factory and an area to the north of Bottoms Mill, documentary investigation into the origins of the place-name Cinder Hill and map regression analysis of the landscape. This work revealed the well preserved remains of a 16th to early 20th century farmstead at Cinder Hill Farm, earthworks relating to two (Bottoms mill and Cinder Hill Factory), possibly three textile mill sites, and the complex leat and reservoir system supplying them. No evidence for iron working was found during the study.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological survey of five sites at the Holcombe Moor Training Area, Bury, Greater Manchester (centred SD 76 16; **Figs. 1 & 2**) commissioned by the Historic Environment Advisor (Archaeology) for the Defence Estates, MOD. The survey work was undertaken between September 2007 and January 2009. This survey was conducted in accordance with an archaeological brief agreed between the Defence Estates and the County Archaeologist for Greater Manchester based within the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit. Jonathan Ali provided assistance with the location of local records, whilst Philip Abrahamson of Defence Estates arranged the venue for the evening workshops and access for the public fieldtrips.

1.2 The survey work was designed to address the industrial archaeological potential and assess the significance of several sites discovered during previous archaeological research as part of the continuing archaeological and historical management of the Holcombe Moor Training Area. Several phases of work covering desk-based research, archaeological survey and community archaeology work targeted areas of identified industrial remains at the following sites:

- Cinder Hill Cottages/Farm at SD 7688 1695
- Leat system, stone troughs and retaining wall located at Cinder Hill Factory centred SD 7660 1677
- Earthworks centred upon SD 7673 1691
- Earthworks at Bottoms Mill centred upon SD 7674 1696
- Earthworks at Cinder Hills centred upon SD 767 171

In brief this work comprised:

- Documentary and cartographic research.
- Community participation in two training evenings and in the fieldwork.
- Topographical and geophysical survey work.
- Interpretation and report production.
- Production of an ordered archive.
- Presentation of the results in a public seminar.

1.3 The Setting and Landscape Background

The archaeological sites investigated all lie within the Holcombe Moor Training Centre. This was established during the 1940s and now forms part of the Defence Training Estates (North) and is used as a training camp for the Territorial Army, Army Cadet force and Regular Army throughout the year. The training area is a long, rectangular, piece of land 500m to 1000m wide aligned north-south and running c. 3.75km from moor to valley. Its highest point is 418m AOD along its northern edge on Holcombe Moor and its lowest is 180m AOD at Hawkshaw along the southern edge formed by Bolton Road. This area of 303 hectares encompasses the headwaters and upper valley of the Holcombe Brook and is defined by Harcles Hill to the east, Holcombe Moor to the north and Scholes Height to the north-west. Either side of the valley of Holcombe Brook below 250m AOD the landscape is dominated by light woodland, young woodland plantations, and open pasture. The area contains three sites of biological interest, a listed building and a number of public footpaths.

Previous archaeological work within the Holcombe Moor Training Area was undertaken by Lancaster University in 1995. This identified 66 sites of archaeological significance with an additional 10 sites recorded during a Historic Boundary Survey undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North during 2006. This latter survey recommended that a number of archaeologically significant industrial sites be subjected to further research and the current work arises from this recommendations.

The archaeological surveys of 1995 and 2006 indicated that human activity within the bounds of the Training Area was attested as early as the Mesolithic period (c. 8000 to c. 4000 BC). The upper Holcombe valley and the hills above it remained wooded throughout the Neolithic period (c. 4000 to c. 2500 BC). There is some pollen and archaeological evidence to show that woodland clearance began at Holcombe during the Bronze Age (c. 2500 to 700 BC), with renewed woodland clearance activity in the area of Holcombe Moor during the Iron Age (700 BC to AD 43) and the Roman periods (AD 43 to 410). By the end of the Iron Age the uplands around Holcombe had become dominated by heather moorland (OAN 2006, 10-12). After some woodland regeneration in the Early Medieval period (AD 410-1066) the Holcombe area emerges into history as 'Holcombe Forest' in 1176. This was an area within the large manor of Tottington governed by Forest Law (OAN 2006, 12-3). Forest Law governed the Training Area until 1507 when this was lifted and palaeo-environmental evidence suggests that the upper Holcombe Valley remained wooded during the medieval period, although there is evidence for a growth in clearance activity (OAN 2006, 15).

Despite the identification of some evidence for medieval cultivation in the form of ridge and furrow in several areas of the Training Area and a number of late medieval farmsteads along its edge, the present landscape appears to be the result of post-1507 enclosure activity (OAN 2006, 15-6). Such activity had produced by the 1620s a dispersed settlement pattern centred upon isolated farmsteads practicing mixed farming supported by home-based textile production. Mining and quarrying activity are also attested in the upper Holcombe Brook valley from the 17th century onwards (OAN 2006, 16-8). This farming pattern characterised the upper valley until the creation of the Holcombe Moor Training Area in the mid-20th century.

2. Archaeological Survey Results

2.1 Introduction

The current survey work examined a series of six stone, earthwork and platform complexes. These were clustered in four areas; three along Holcombe Brook between the sites of Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory and one to the east of the Brook and Bottoms Mill on the site of Cinder Hill Farm. Four of these six sites (see sections 2.3 to 2.5 below) were associated with water-powered textile production.

2.2 Cinder Hill Farm at SD 7688 1695 OAN 2006, site no 24; GMSMR 10014.1.0 (Fig 2)

The ruins of Cinder Hill Farm lie east of Holcombe Brook at approximately 250m AOD. The 1995 and 2006 surveys identified the remains of the farmhouse, a pond to the north, a building platform immediately to the south of the farmhouse and around 40m to the south of this complex another platform with at least two stone-lined tanks.

The earliest documentary reference to the Cinder Hill area appears to be two entries in the Tottington Manor Court Rolls from the late 16th century. In 1578 Robert Holt leased to Henry Nuttoe (presumably Henry Nuttall) for 21 years one close of land called 'Synderhill' (LRO DDHcl3/72 & 60). However, in 1590 Robert Holt gave a new lease to Henry Nuttall for one messuage, other buildings, and two acres in Holcombe Hey called 'Synderhilles'. This appears to be the moment at which the farmstead later known as Cinder Hill was created from the earlier medieval holding of Holcombe Hey (OAN 2006, Fig 4).

In 1688 Thomas Ainsworth held Cinder Hill, which at the time comprised 'a messuage [dwelling], other buildings and 12 [Lancashire] acres of ancient copyhold land' (LRO DDHcl 3/202). A lost datestone from the farm gave a date of 1715, which might have marked a change in tenancy (OAN 2006, 69). In 1794 the tenancy was held by John Brandwood when an engine house, location unknown but it has been suggested that this was at the Cinder Hill Factory site (Tyson 1989), is also mentioned as part of the tenancy (LRO DDX/118/139/29). The Brandwoods are also attested here in 1802 (LRO DDX 118/154/3) but the farmstead was unoccupied in 1838 when the tithe apportionment was compiled.

20 people from three families are recorded as living at Cinder Hill on the 1861 census including six cotton weavers and Thomas Wood, farm labourer, and his family. In 1871 there were six residents, all belonging to the Lennon family who were farming 12 acres. By 1881 James Hutchinson and his wife and daughter were farming 18 acres at Cinder Hill, whilst in 1891 the sole occupier was Benjamin Whorrell. The farm buildings were demolished in the 1960s after a period of abandonment.

The earliest detailed map of the area is the tithe map of 1842 (**Fig 3**). This shows three buildings and a pond. At the northern end of the site was a pond with along its southern edge a rectangular plan building aligned west to east with an eastern outshut. This was probably the farmhouse. South-west of this building, in the south-western corner of the present northern platform, was a small square structure. 30m to the south of this feature was a T-shaped building on the present southern platform with the short arm of the T-plan running west to east. These buildings are described on the tithe apportionment as a 'house, barn, garden and cowhouse'. Later Ordnance Survey mapping (**Figs 4-12**) records the pond and its rectangular building and the southern T-plan building on the first edition six inch map (1850-1) and again on the 1:2500 first edition from 1893. In both cases the two buildings were linked by a straight boundary now represented by an

embankment running from the southern platform to the northern platform. The same pattern is repeated on the 1912 second revision six inch map, but by the 1929 1:2500 revision the southern T-shaped building and the field boundary to the north had both gone. The site is described as Cinder Hill cottage son the 1938 1:2500 series edition and is shown as two linked ranges. It occurs for the last time as Cinder Hill Cottage son the 1955 1:10000 series edition but is missing from the 1968 edition of the 1:2500 mapping series.

Two pieces of fieldwork were undertaken for the present survey. Firstly, an earthwork survey was done so as to better identified the surviving features of the farm complex (**Fig 15**). This highlighted the location of the pond and the ruins of the adjacent farmhouse. It also recorded the northern and southern platforms. It is now clear that the two stone-lined tanks in the southern platform were originally within the T-plan building, although their function remains unclear.

Secondly, a resistivity survey was undertaken of the house platform in an attempt to recover internal details of the building's layout (**Figs 16-17**). Whilst some internal walls were apparent more detail was forthcoming from an examination of the maps in conjunction with the earthwork survey. This evidence suggested that the farmhouse was originally a single depth building of two bays which was later extended by a single bay to the east.

2.3 Earthworks centred upon SD 7673 1710 (Figs 2 & 18)

North of the footbridge across Holcombe Brook where the trackway crosses Holcombe Brook were several earthwork channels and banks of unknown date. Topographical survey work was undertaken on these features. This work indicated the presence of a rectangular mill pond, c. 25m x 10m in plan, on the eastern side of the brook, fed by a leat running in from the north (**Fig 18**). The purpose of this feature is unclear, although a break in the earthen mill dam in the middle of the western side may mark the position of a second leat which ran into a flat area which may represent a building platform. It is thus feasible that this might represent a lost textile mill site, not recorded by the map evidence (it does not occur on the 1842 tithe map for instance), but perhaps one of the nine textile mills recorded in the 1794 Tottingotn survey, although only excavation would confirm or deny this suggestion.

Immediately south of where the trackway crossed Holcombe Brook was a stone weir and north of this was a shallow earthwork which appears to have been the start of a head race leading to the mill pond for Bottoms Mill to the south (see below).

2.4 Earthworks at Bottoms Mill centred upon SD 7674 1696 (OAN 2006, sites no 5 & 76; GMSMR 71.1.0) (Fig 2)

The site of Bottoms Mill was identified in the 1995 and 2006 surveys. It comprised two elements; a mill pond to the north which survived as a large earthwork and a rectangular mill building to the south. It appears to have been part of the Cinder Hill Farm landholding in the 18th and 19th centuries (**Fig 13**). The Bottoms Mill site is first mentioned in the 1794 Tottington Survey when there are two entries for 'Bottoms' with parts of the site being rented by Ralph Yates, although there is no indication of the function of the site. According to Tyson it was established as a cotton spinning mill in the 1790s and was powered by an overshot water wheel and by a steam engine in the engine house mentioned in the Cinder Hill tenancy in 1794. Between 1802 and 1811 the engine house and presumably the mill was rented by John Pennington and from 1811 until 1823 by Thomas Pennington. In 1823 the Cinder Hill farm tenancy passed to John Parker who converted the engine house and mill into three cottages named 'Bottoms' building a new mill at Cinder Hill Factory some 200m downstream (Tyson 1989). The site is shown on the 1842 tithe map (**Fig 3**) and on the 1838 tithe apportionment is listed as part of the Cinder Hill farm tenancy

as three cottages occupied by Colin Parker and Thomas Parker with one empty (LRO Tottington tithe award).

The earliest map to show Bottoms Mill in detail is the 1842 Tottington Tithe map, by which time the site had been converted into three cottages. This records a rectangular structure aligned roughly east to west. The site is shown and named on the first edition OS six inch map from 1850-1 and shown in detail on the first edition 25 inch map of 1893 as a building with two rooms and a rear extension. It occurs in this form on the 1910 map but is missing from the 1929 map by which date it appears to have been demolished (**Figs 4-12**).

The earthwork survey (**Fig 19**) recorded the extent of the mill pond and the course of the leat running from the weir on Holcombe Brook into the north-eastern corner of the mill pond. It also recorded a second leat running from a reservoir further up the valley side into the north-western corner of the pond. However, no earthworks were found on the site of Bottoms Mill itself.

2.5 Cinder Hill Factory and Leat System centred SD 7660 1677 (OAN 2006, sites no 9 & 50; GMSMR 10016.1.3) (Figs 2 & 19)

The 1995 and 2006 surveys identified a complex leat system and substantial earthworks relating to the Cinder Hill Factory site. This included along stone troughs and a large retaining wall to the north-west of the site which might have been part of a reservoir.

The factory appears to have been part of the Cinder Hill Farm landholding throughout the 18th and 19th centuries (**Fig 13**). According to Tyson Cinder Hill Factory was built as a cotton spinning mill around 1823 by John Parker, the year that the nearby Bottoms Mill, also rented by John Parker, closed. The site is shown but not named on the 1838 tithe award when it was part of the Cinder Hill Farm tenancy and was occupied by Colin Parker and is shown on the 1842 tithe map (LRO Tottington tithe award; **Fig 3**). The Parkers remained in occupation until the 1850s. The electoral roll for Tottington Lower End in 1860 (LRO DDX 118/156/8) records Cinder Hill Mill as a cotton mill rented at £100 pa, and jointly owned and occupied by Edward Wild and Robert Wild of Nuttall Lane. The mill was converted from water power to steam by 1859 and changed to woollen weaving around 1860. It closed in 1868 but between 1871 and 1875 was used as a bleach works, finally closing in 1876 (Tyson 1989). The mill is described in this later period as being three stories high with an area of 731 square yards and was extended in 1864 (LRO PUB 8/22).

The earliest map to show Cinder Hill Factory in detail is the 1842 Tottington Tithe map. This records a rectangular structure aligned roughly north-east to south-west with a small north-western wing. The site is shown and named on the first edition OS six inch map from 1850-1 and shown in detail on the first edition 25 inch map of 1893 by which date the north-western wing had been demolished and a north-eastern wing added, presumably in 1864. It occurs in this form on the 1910 map but is missing from the 1929 map by which date it appears to have been demolished (**Fig 4-12**).

A resistivity survey was undertaken over the site of Cinder Hill Factory. This failed to reveal any features relating directly to the mill, probably to the presence of a large overburden of rubble (**Figs 20-1**). More revealing was the earthwork survey which recorded earthworks associated with the leat and reservoir system as recorded on the 1842 tithe map and the overall position of the factory (**Fig 3**).

2.6 Earthworks at Cinder Hills centred upon SD 767 171 (Fig 2)

Documentary and landscape analysis were undertaken of the rounded earthworks on the eastern

side of Holcombe Brook to the north of Bottoms Mill to confirm their origins. In the past it has been suggested that these features were named after the occurrence of iron smelting in this area. In particular the local historian Dowsett noted the presence of cinders and forge waste the near the farm in the early 19th century which led to the suggestion that there had been a bloomer near to the farm (LUAU 1995; OAN 2006, 69). However, fieldwalking failed to produce any evidence of iron slag along the river bank, nor across these features, nor in the vicinity of Cinder Hill Farm. Dr Fred Broadhurst, a retired geologist from the University of Manchester, suggested that they probably represent peri-glacial melt-water features from the end of the last Ice Age. Furthermore, analysis of the development of the place-name Cinder Hills or Cinder Hill suggests an alternative topographical origin rather than one derived from industrial activity.

Following the place-name back through the documents for the Holcombe Training Area reveals that the current spelling of 'Cinder Hill' first occurs in the early 19th century. The earliest form of the modern spelling so far located is 'Cinder Hill' in the will of Lawrence Brandwood from 1812 (LRO WS). The turnpike map of 1797 has the unique spelling of 'Cynderhill' (Bury Archives BAS/ZAL/139) but before that date the area and farmstead is referred to as 'Sinder Hill'. This is the form in the Church Tax Assessment for the area in 1794 (LRO DDX/118/154/3), and in the Tottington Manor Survey of the same year (LRO DDX/118/139/29). The index of surrenders for Tottington Manor from 1690 and 1695 records the form as 'Sinderhills' (LRO DDHcl 3) as does the record of the lease of Thomas Ainsworth in 1688 (LRO DDHcl 3/202). The earliest forms of the place-name so far recorded are to be found in the late 16th century court rolls for the Manor of Tottington. In 1590 Robert Holt gave a new lease to Henry Nuttall for one messuage, other buildings and two acres in Holcombe Hey called 'Synderhilles'. The very earliest reference so far found comes from 1578 when it is recorded that Robert Holt leased to Henry Nutte (presumably Henry Nuttall) for 21 years one close of land called 'Synderhill' (LRO DDHcl3/72 & 60). This appears to the moment at which the tenement later known as Cinder Hill was created from the earlier medieval holding of Holcombe Hey (OAN 2006, Fig 4).

The 'synder' place-name element is often used as a variant spelling in the 16th and 17th centuries for 'sunder' and meant separated. Cinder Hill Farm lies at the northern end of a small, narrow, ridge c. 1km long and no more than 200m wide (**Fig 14**). This ridge lies between Holcombe Brook and the foot of Harcles Hill and its southern half is defined on the eastern side by a small tributary of the Holcombe Brook. It is also at this southern end that it rises to a peak of roughly 260m AOD where Higher Ridge Farm was established by the early 17th century (OAN 2006, Fig 32). In thus forms a small, isolated, shelf of land, separated from the rest of the upper Holcombe Valley and lying at the eastern end of the late medieval holding across or east of the Holcombe Brook (**Fig 13**). This may have given rise to the term 'sundered' or separate hill. Place-names with the 'sunder' or 'sundor' are found throughout Lancashire and Cheshire and usually refer to parcels of land topographically isolated from the main holding, perhaps the most striking being Sunderland Point in the Lune Valley near Lancaster (Dodgson 1970; Mills 1976, 137). Sometimes this is alternatively spelt as 'Sinderland' as in the manor of Hale near Altrincham in northern Cheshire or 'Cinderland', as in the manor of Ashton-under-Lyne in south-eastern Lancashire. In the case of the late medieval Holcombe Hey tenement 'Synderhill' was a small strip of land on the edge of the holding east of Holcombe Brook and thus separated from the main farm (OAN 2006, Fig 4).

Whilst the early forms at Holcombe retain the 'i' or 'y' spelling rather than the 'u' spelling it nevertheless seems likely that the origin of this place-name is more to do with the topographical position of the area than with its industrial history. However, until earlier forms of the place-name are found an industrial origin can not be entirely ruled out.

Sources

Primary Sources

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DDHcl3/72

DDHcl3/60

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DDX 118/139/29

DDX 118/154/3

DDX 118/156/8

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Figures

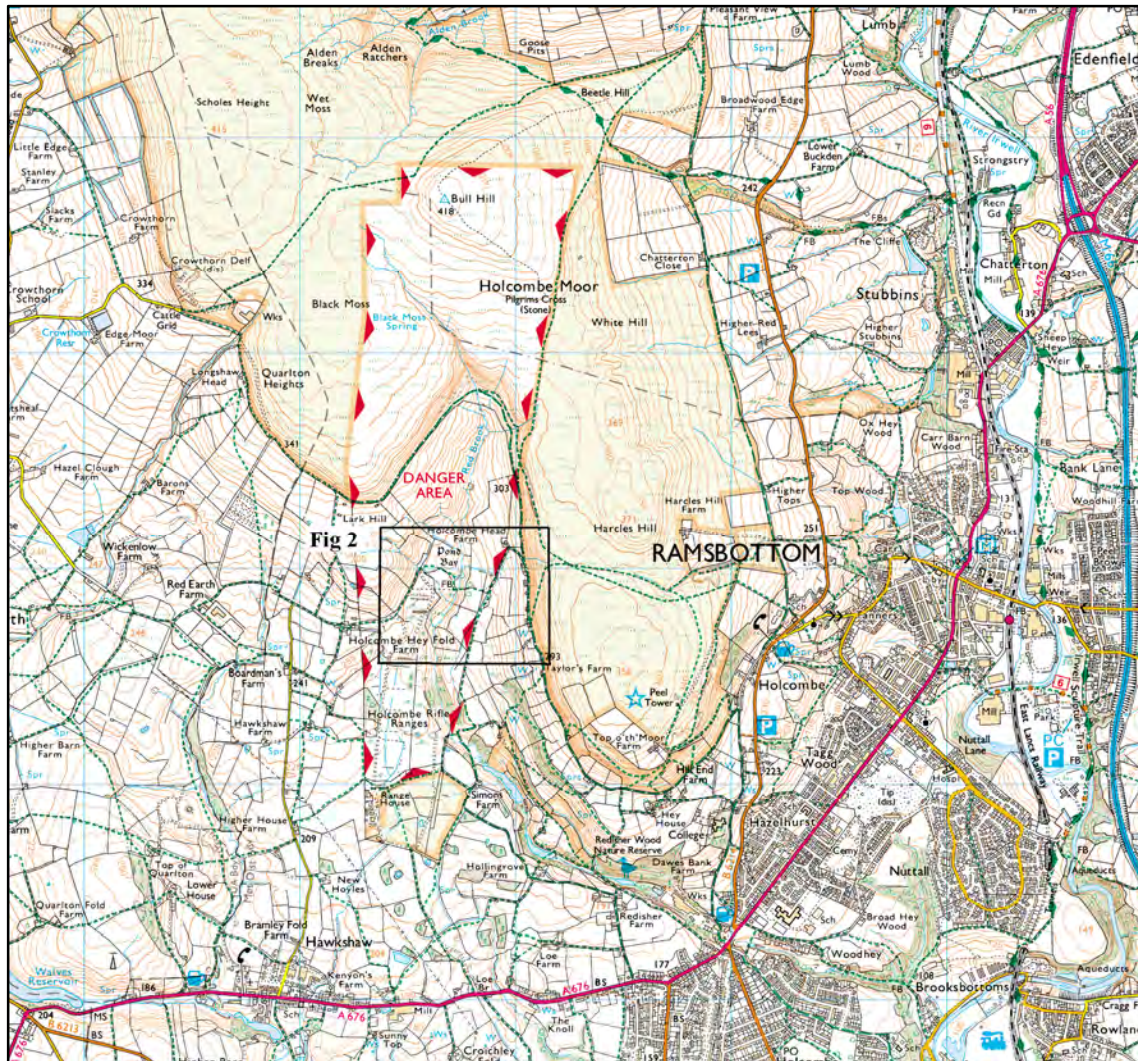


Fig 1: Site plan of Holcombe Moor Training Area with Fig 2 highlighted. OS 1:25000 map series. (Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number WL8021).

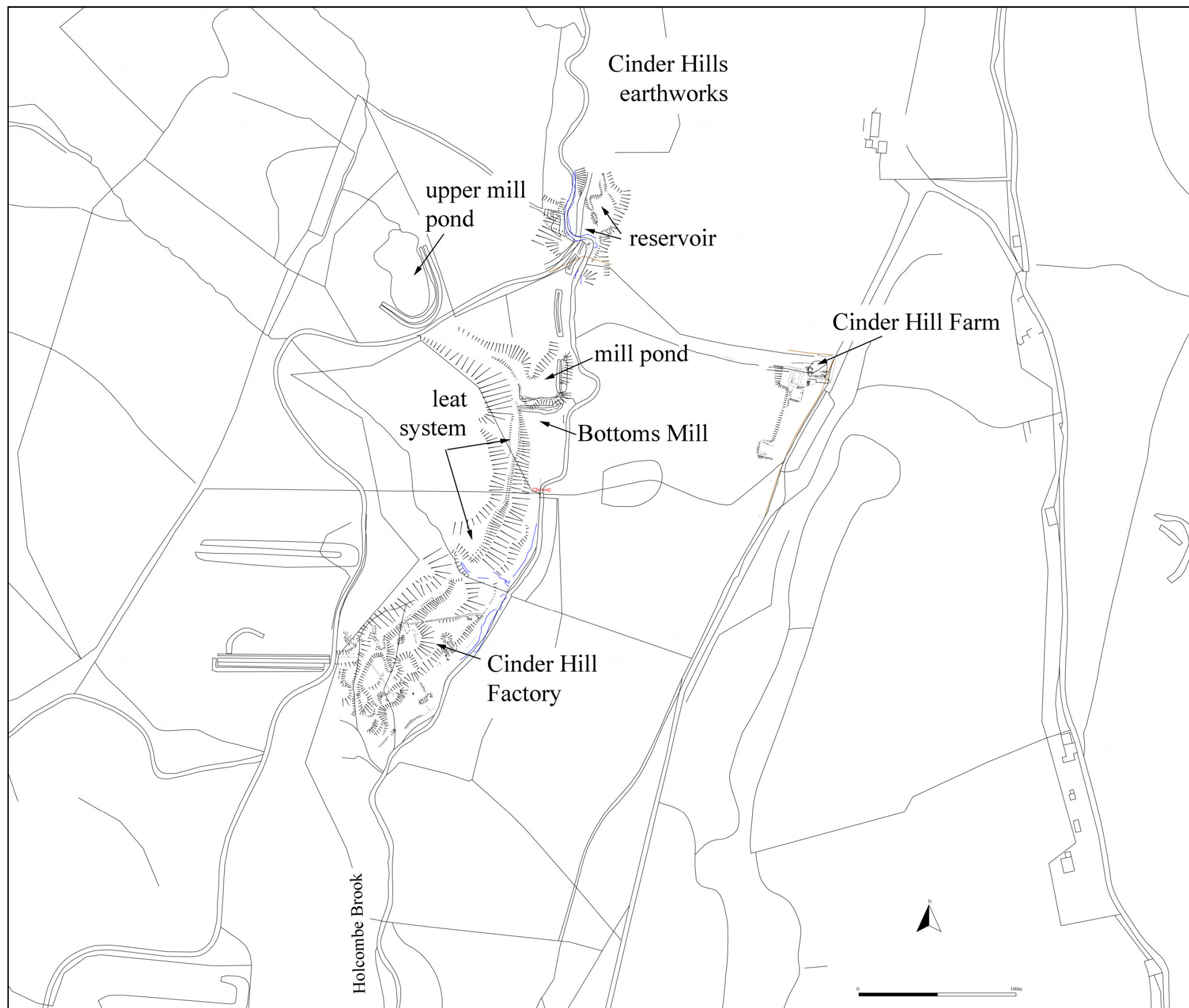


Fig 2: Detailed location plan of the sites investigated during the present study.

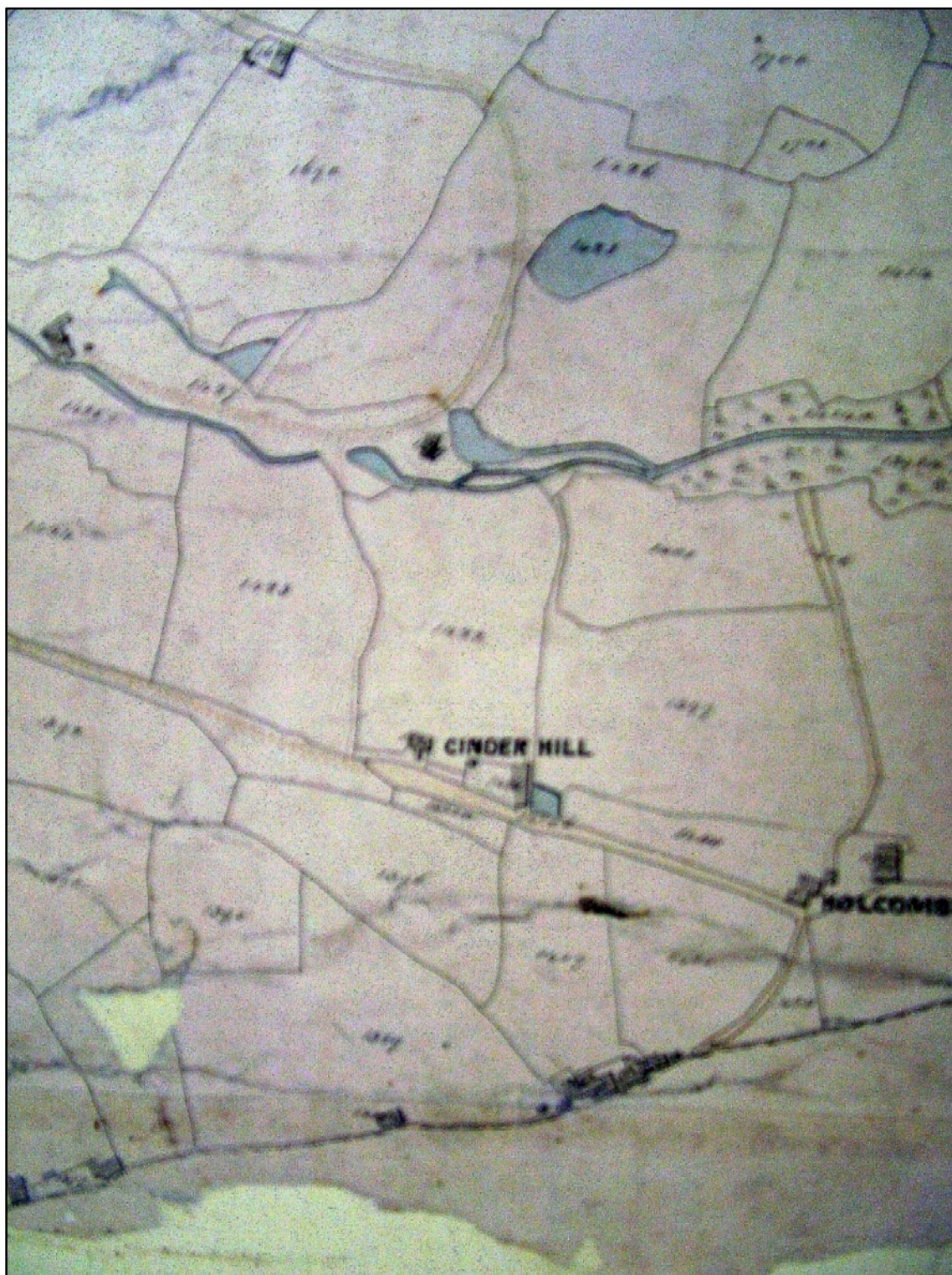


Fig 3: The 1842 Holcombe tithe map showing the location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory.

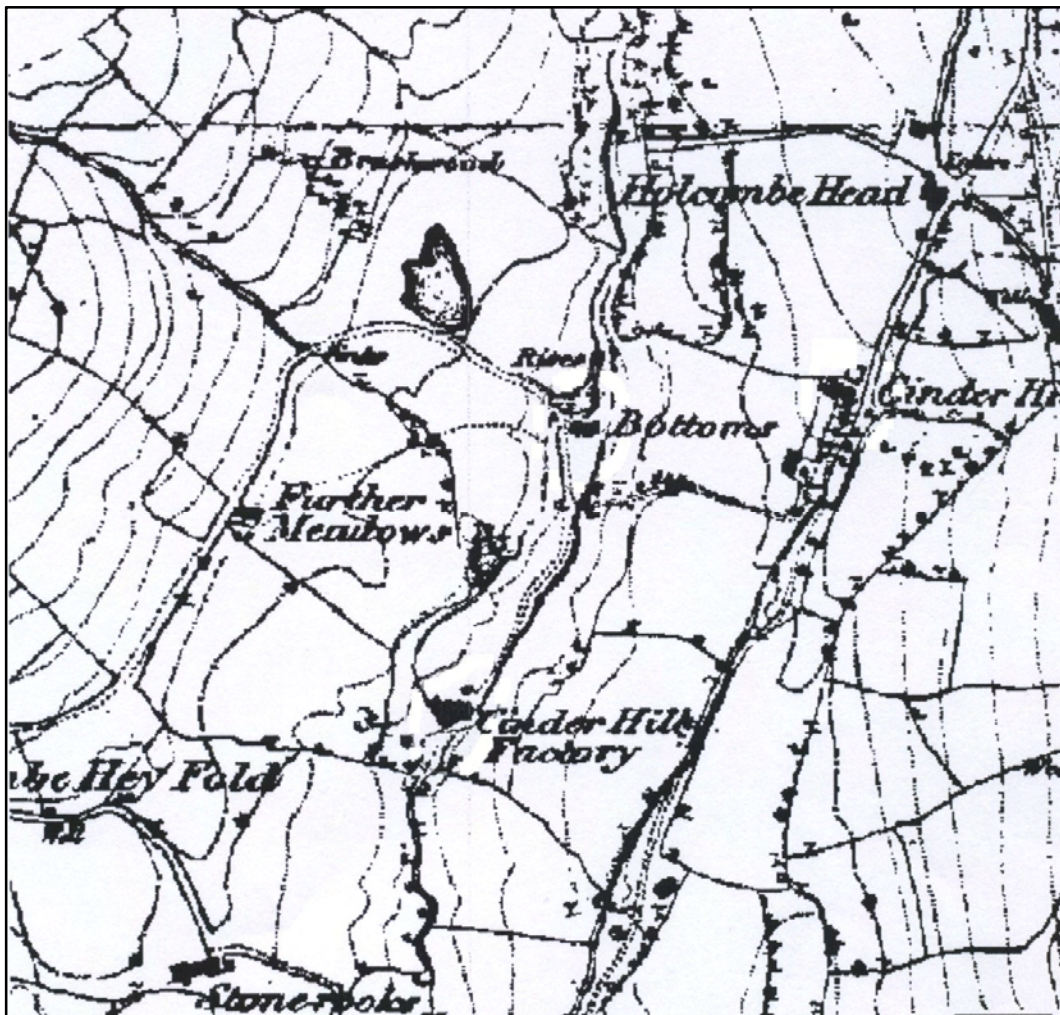


Fig 4: The location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory as shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition Six Series, Lancashire Sheet LXXIX, 1850-1.

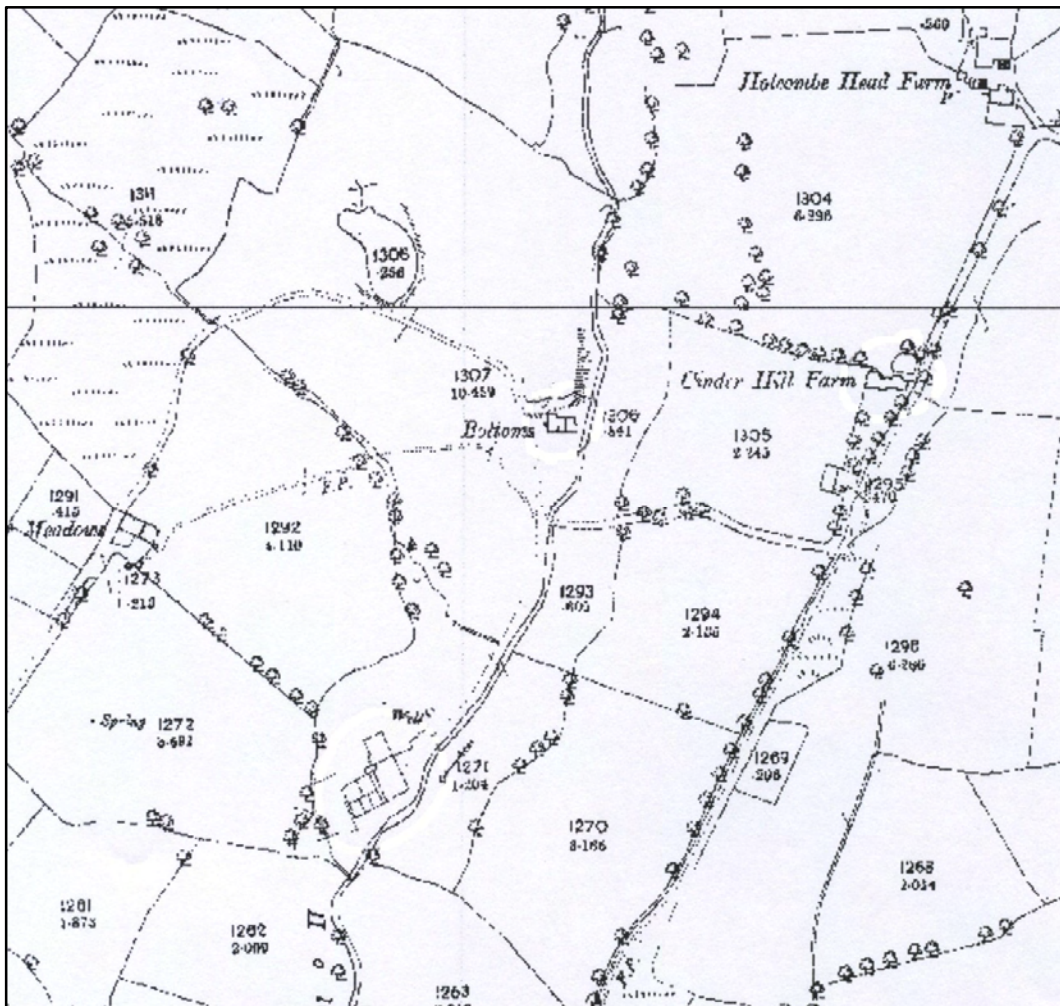


Fig 5: The location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory as shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition 1:2500 Series, Lancashire Sheet LXXIX.11 1893.

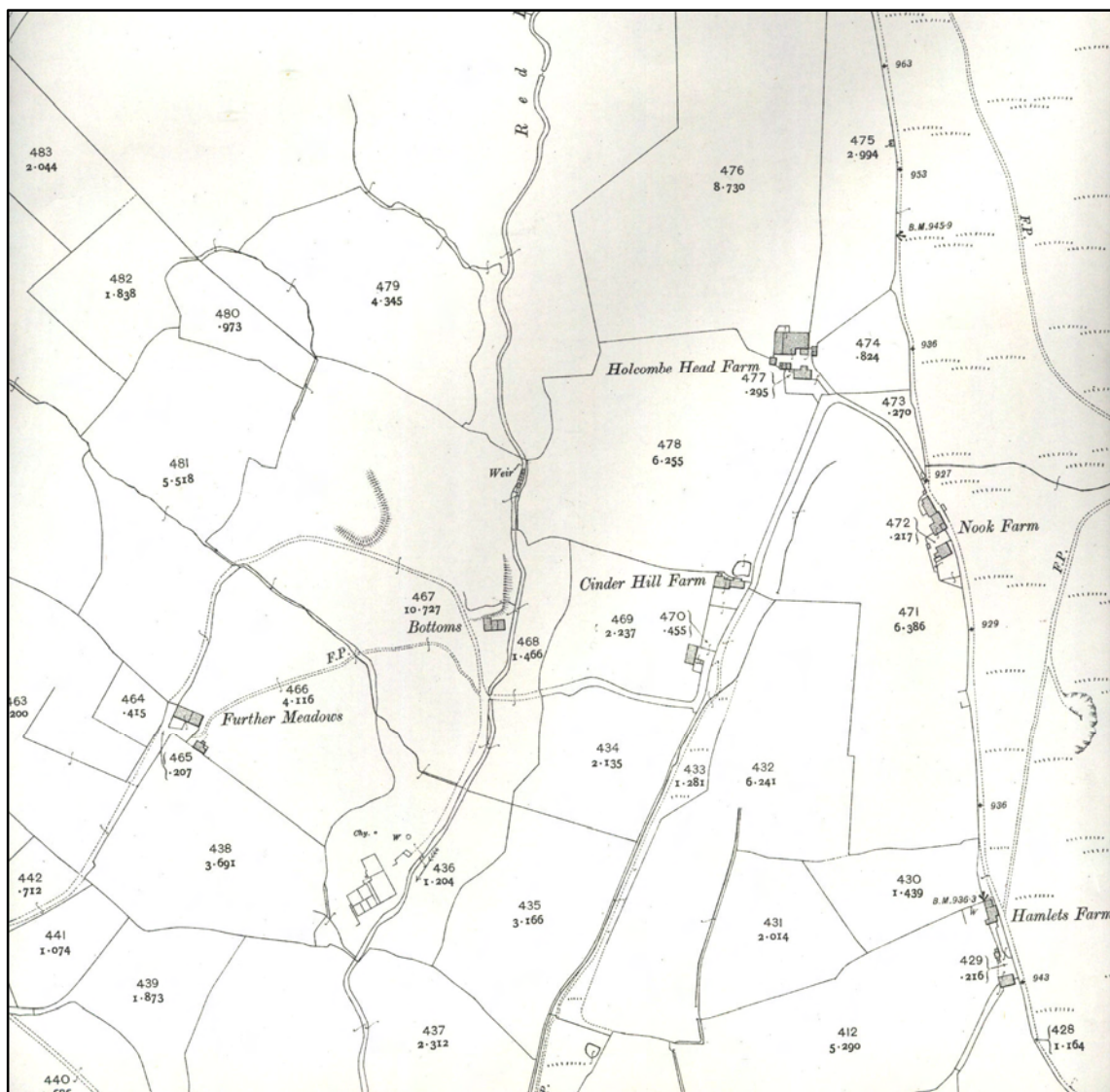


Fig 6: The location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Series, Lancashire Sheet LXXIX.11 1910.

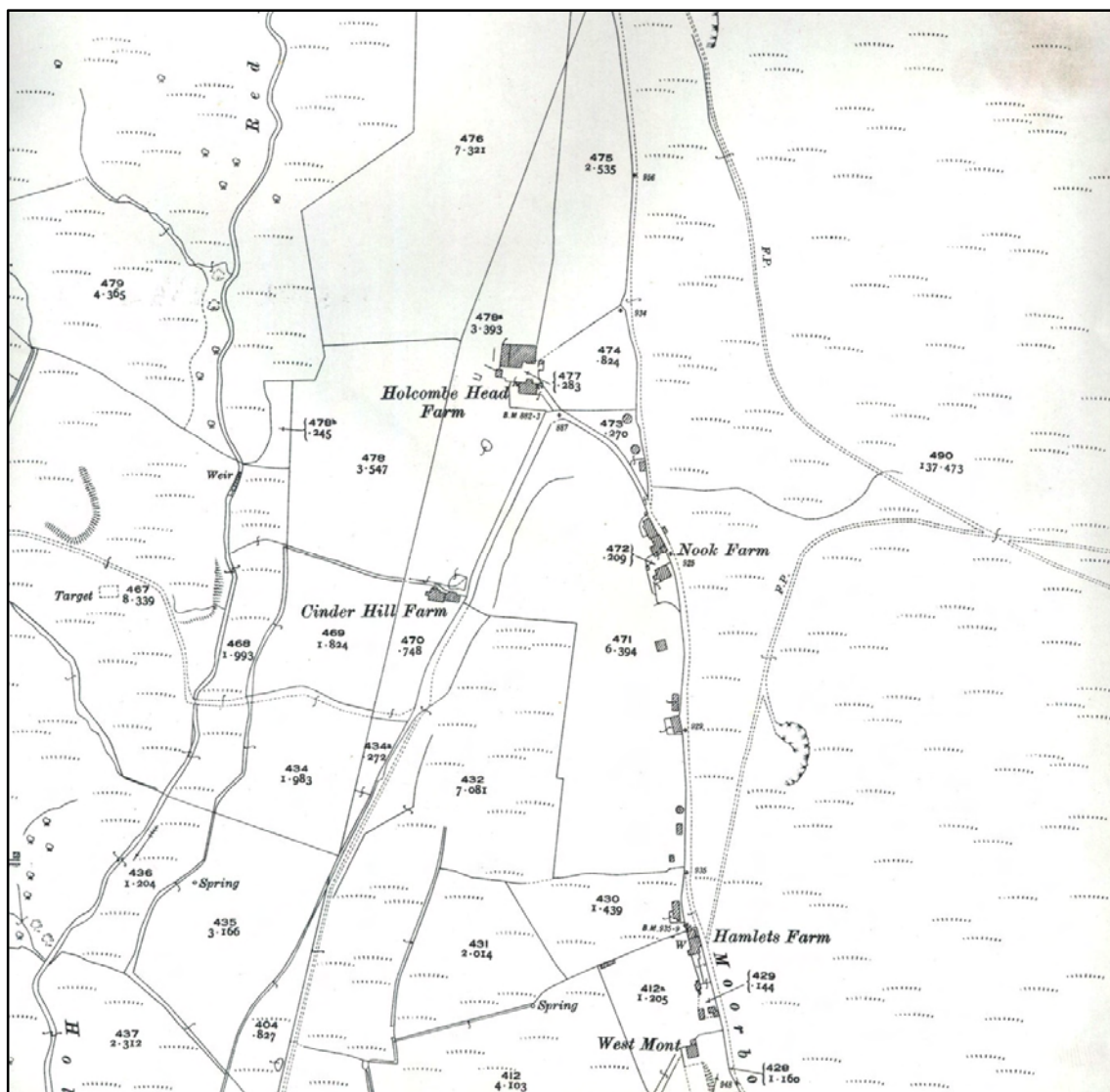


Fig 7: The location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Series, Lancashire Sheet LXXIX.11 1929.

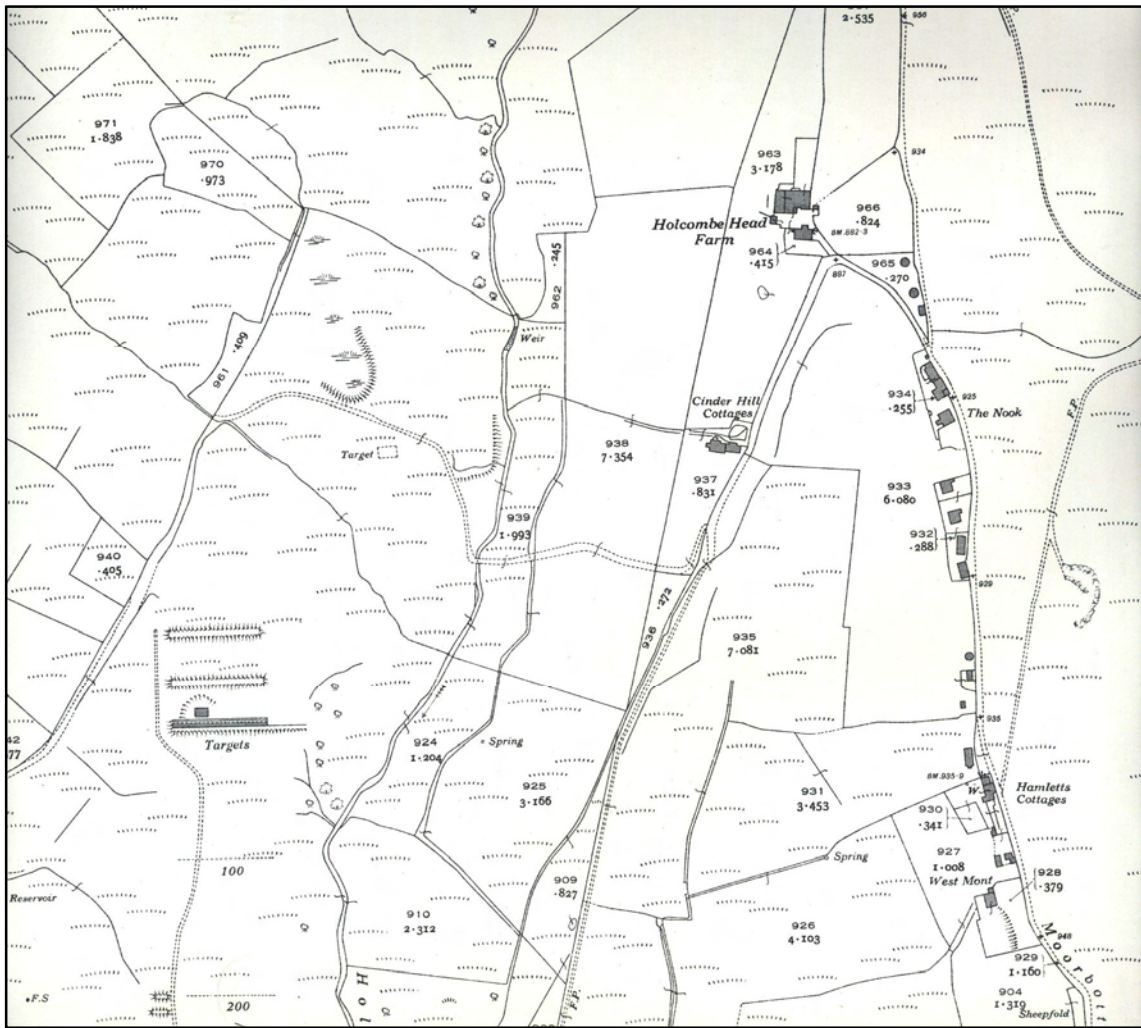


Fig 8: The location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Series, Lancashire Sheet LXXIX.11 1938.

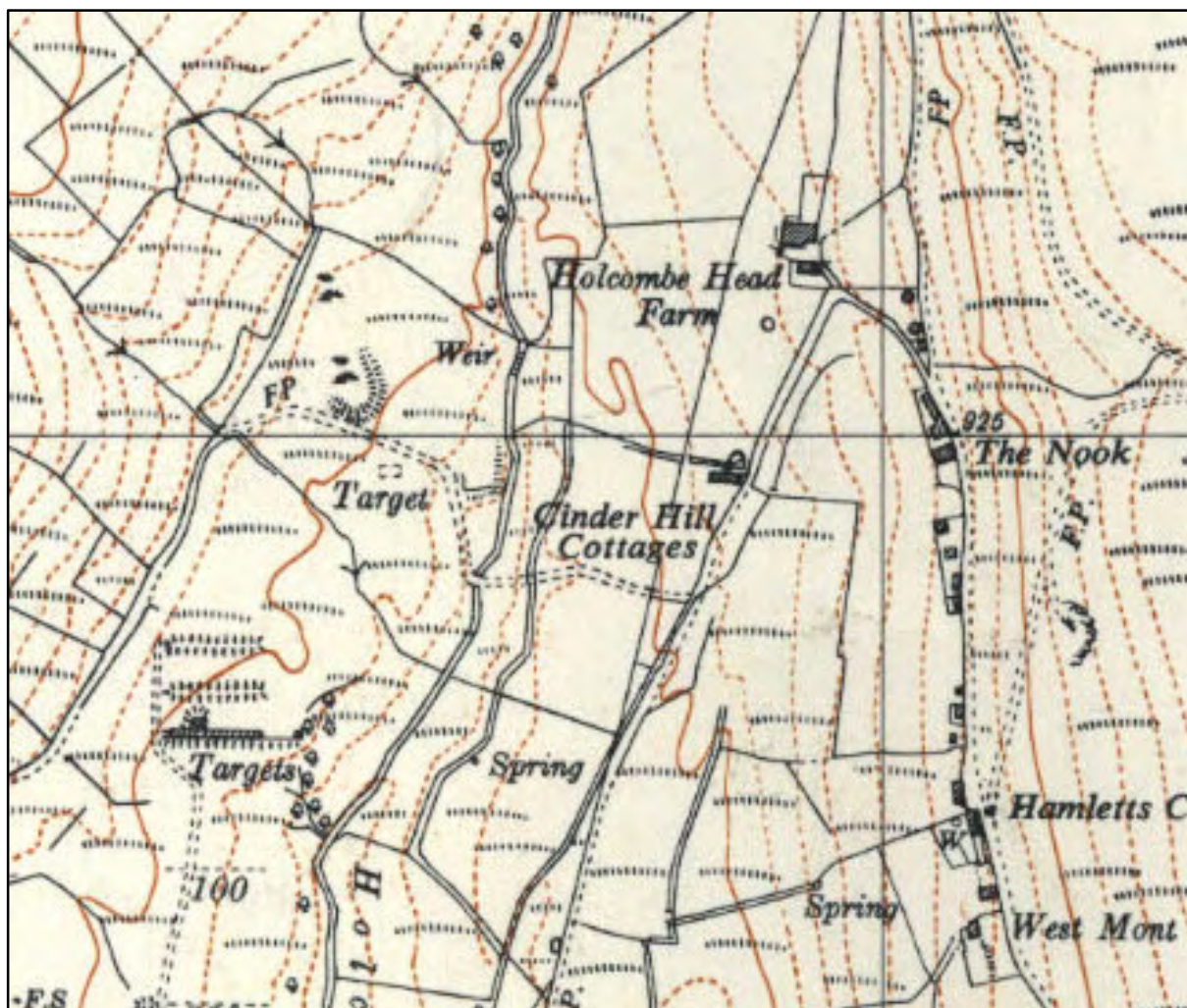


Fig 9: The location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:10000 Series, SD 71 NE 1955.

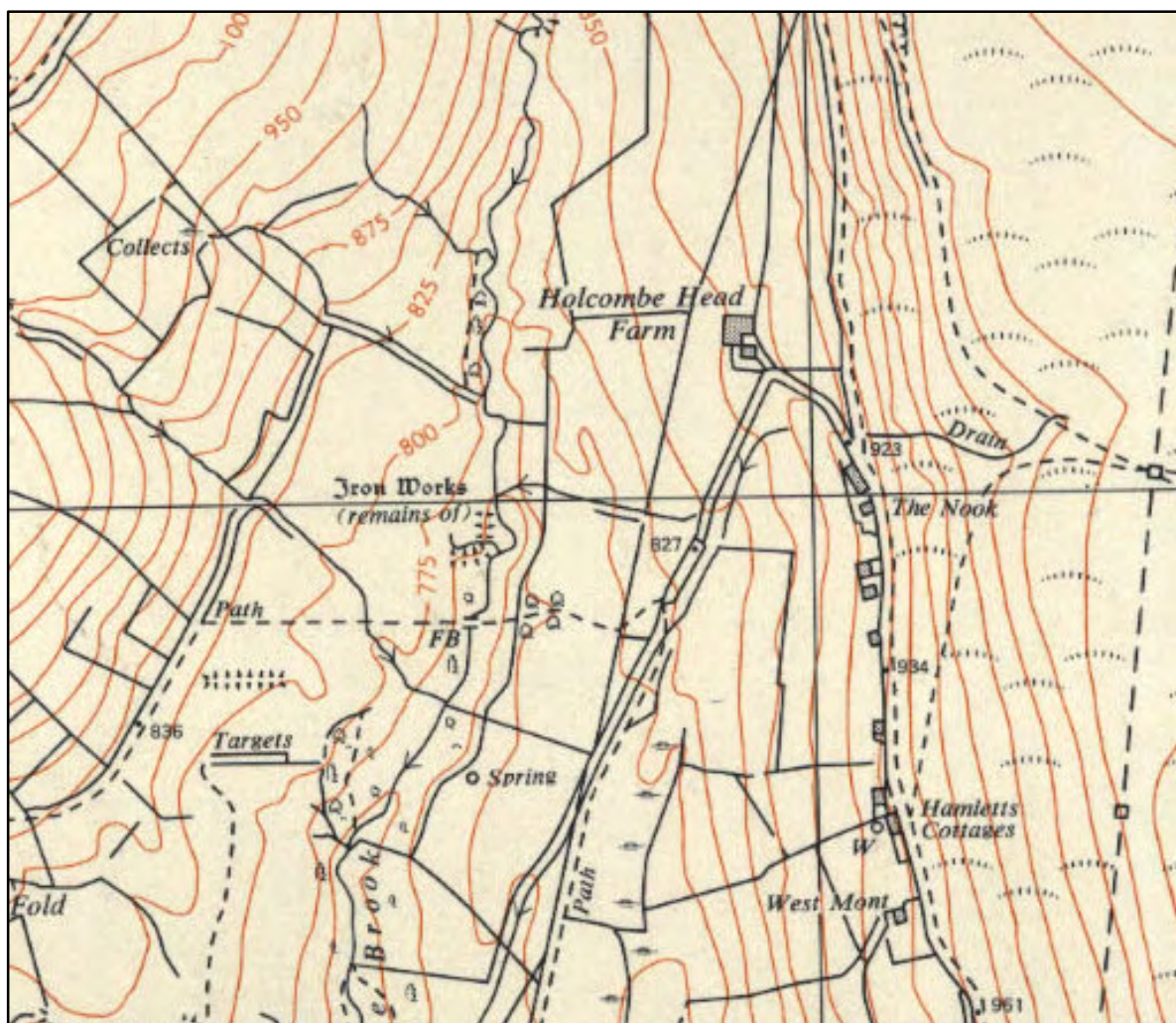


Fig 10: The location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:10000 Series, SD 71 NE 1968.

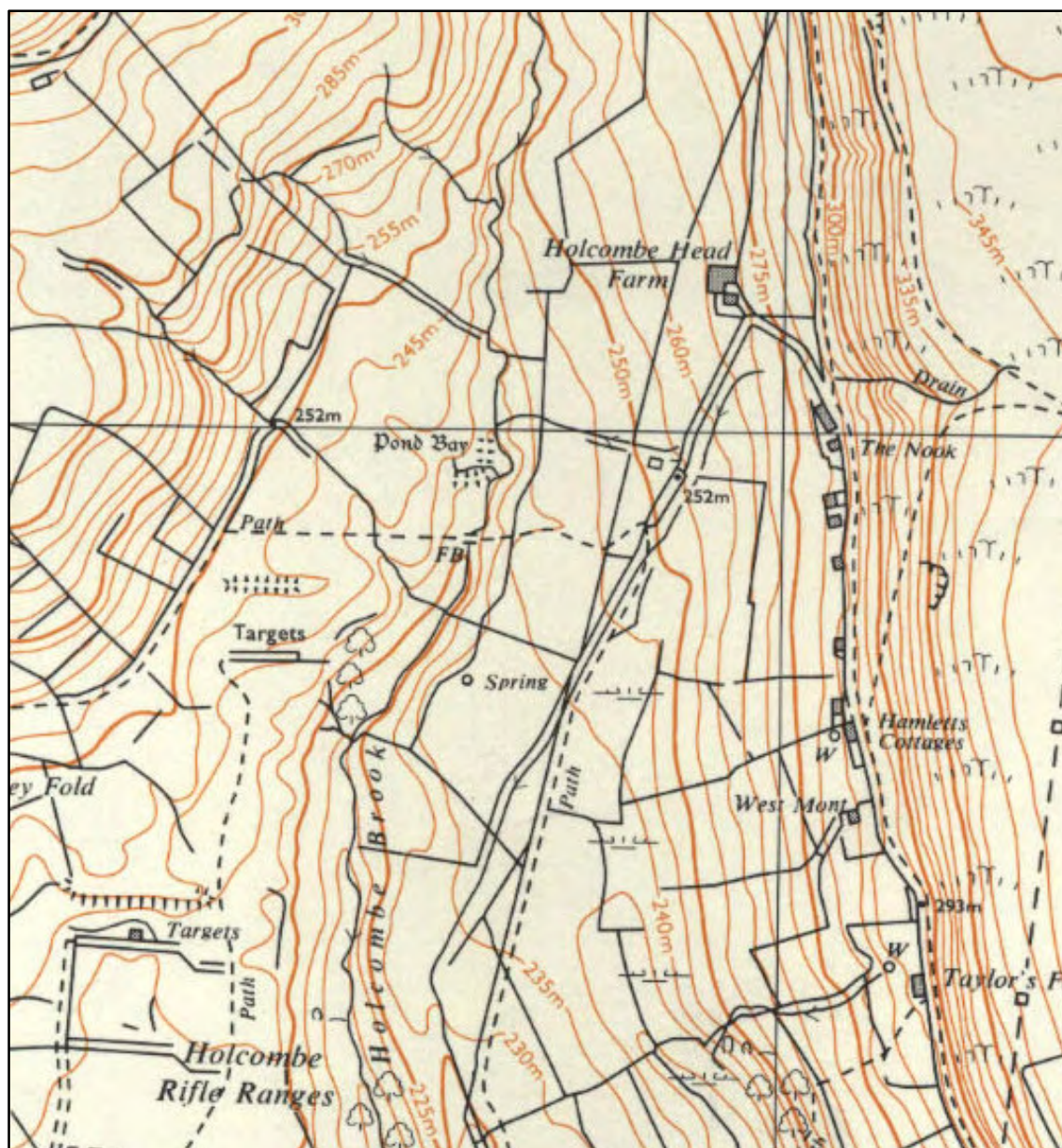


Fig 11: The location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:10000 Series, SD 71 NE 1982.

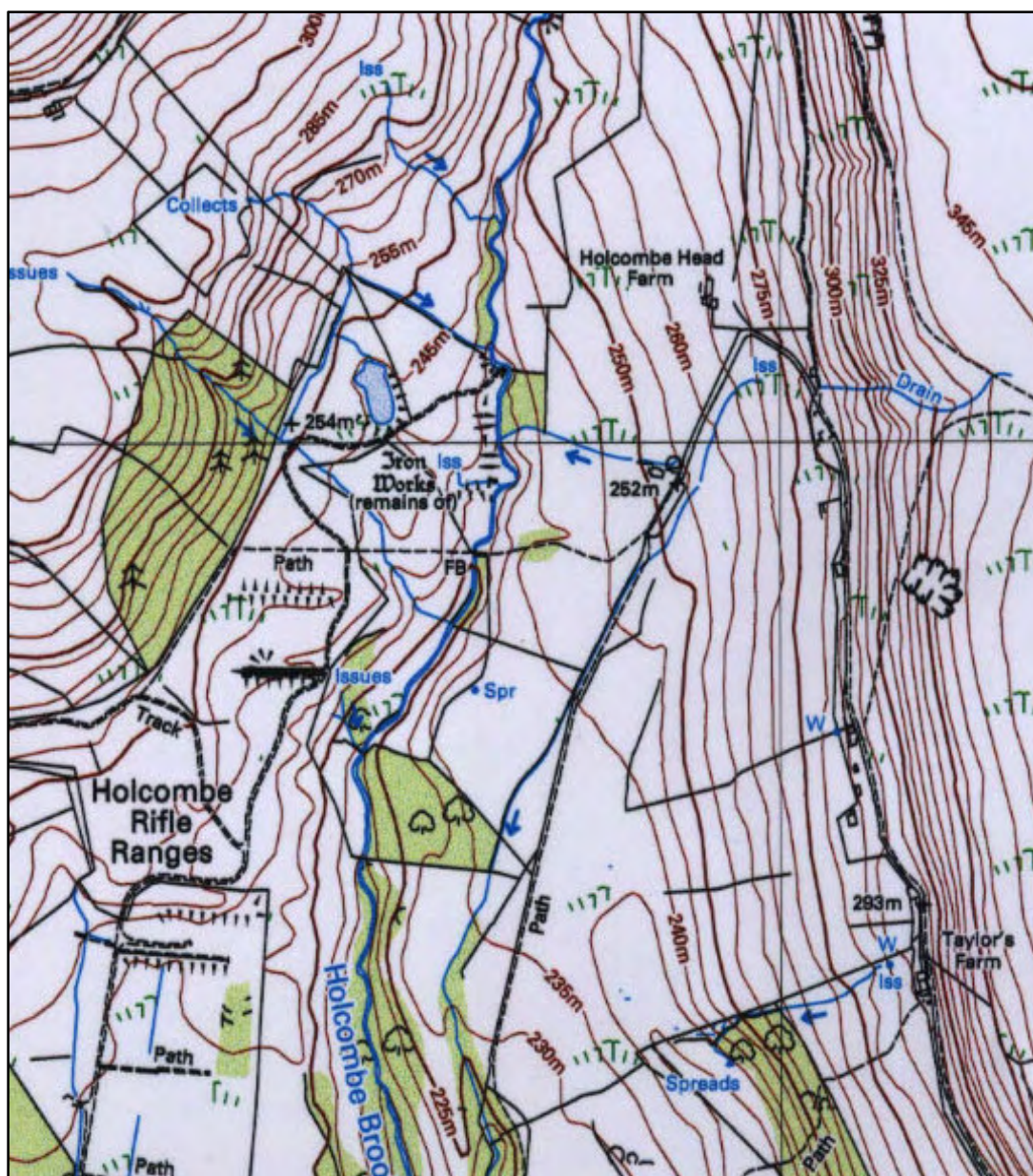


Fig 12: The location of Cinder Hill Farm, Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill Factory as shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:10000 Series, SD 71 NE 2003.

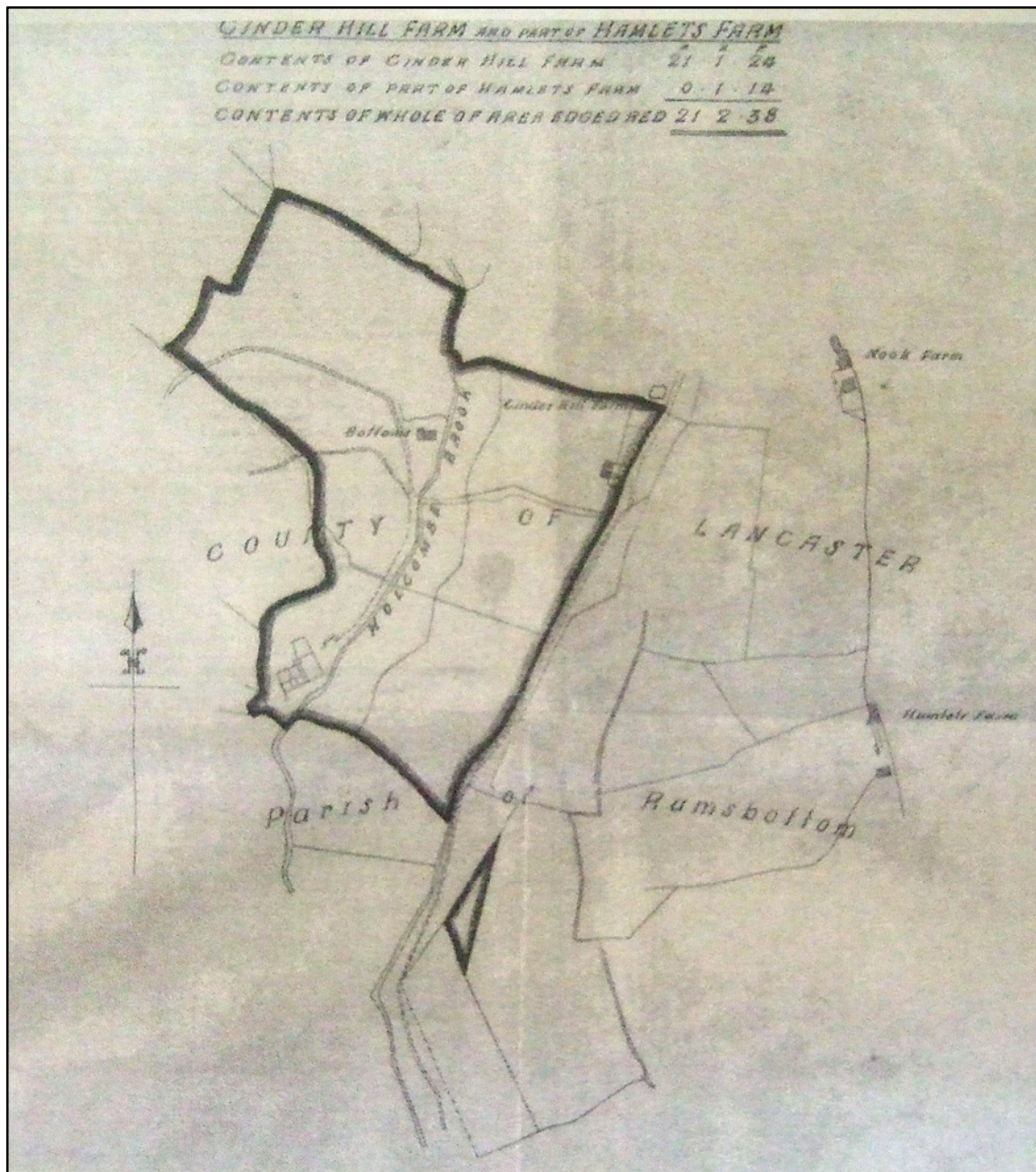


Fig 13: The extent of the Cinder Hill Farm tenancy in the early 20th century. Source: Holcombe Training Area Archives, sale catalogue.

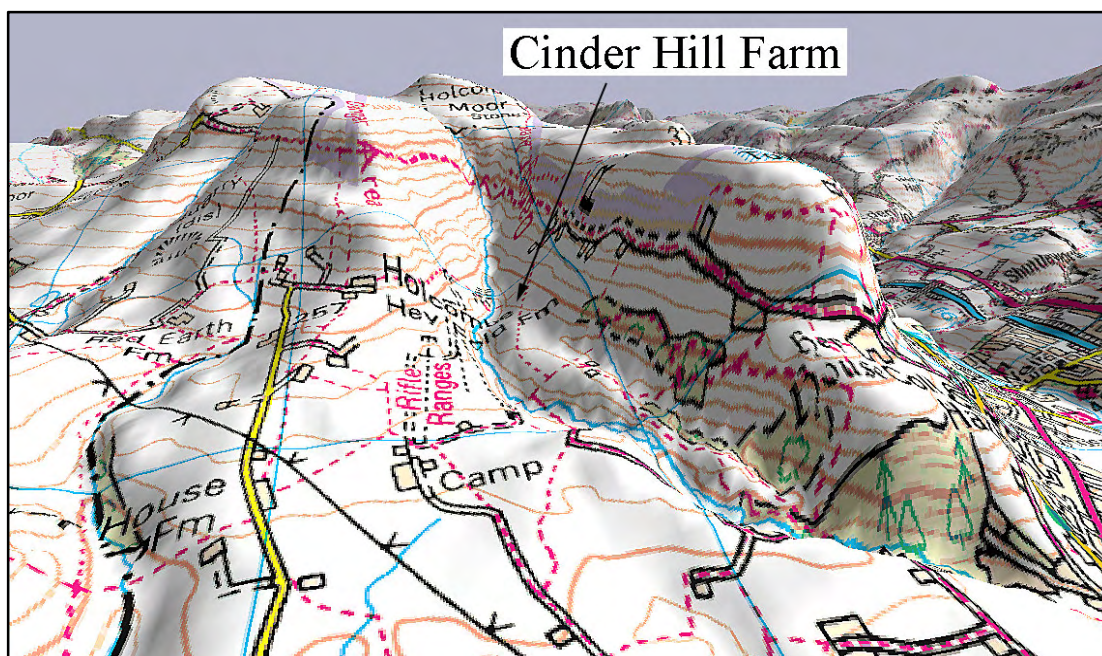


Fig 14: The topographical position of Cinder Hill Farm.

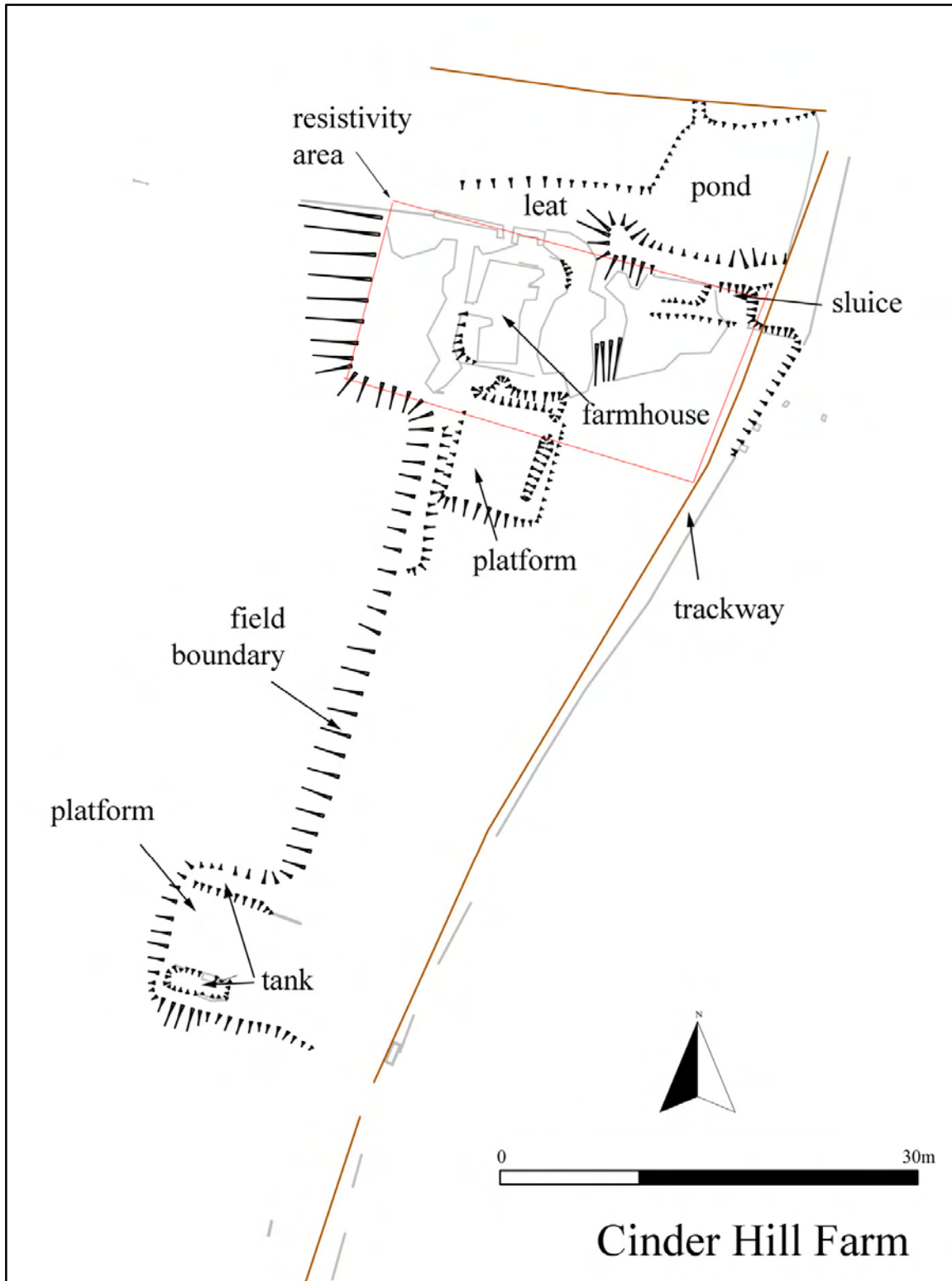


Fig 15: The earthwork at Cinder Hill Farm.

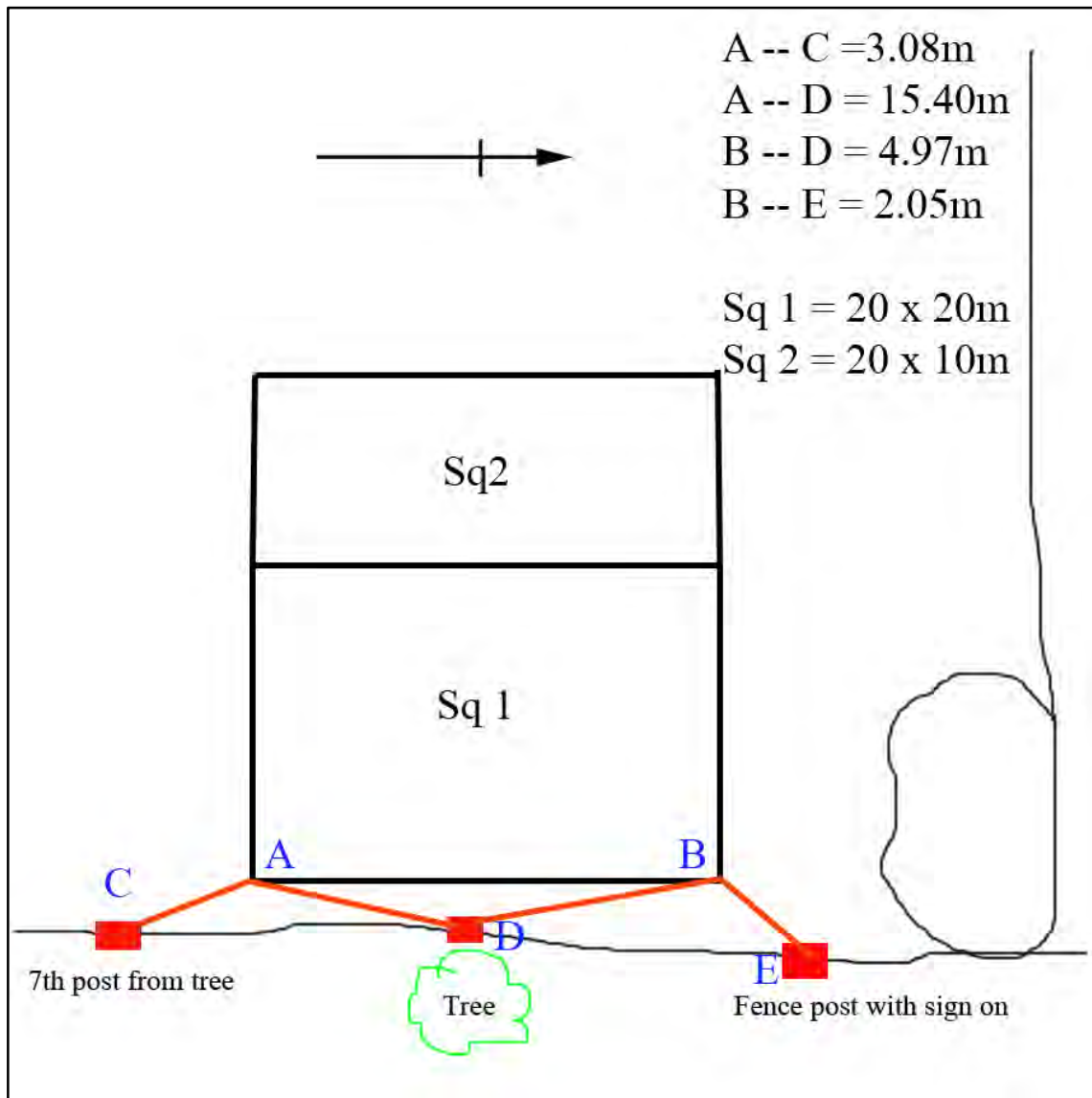


Fig 16: The location of the Cinder Hill Farm resistivity survey in 2008.

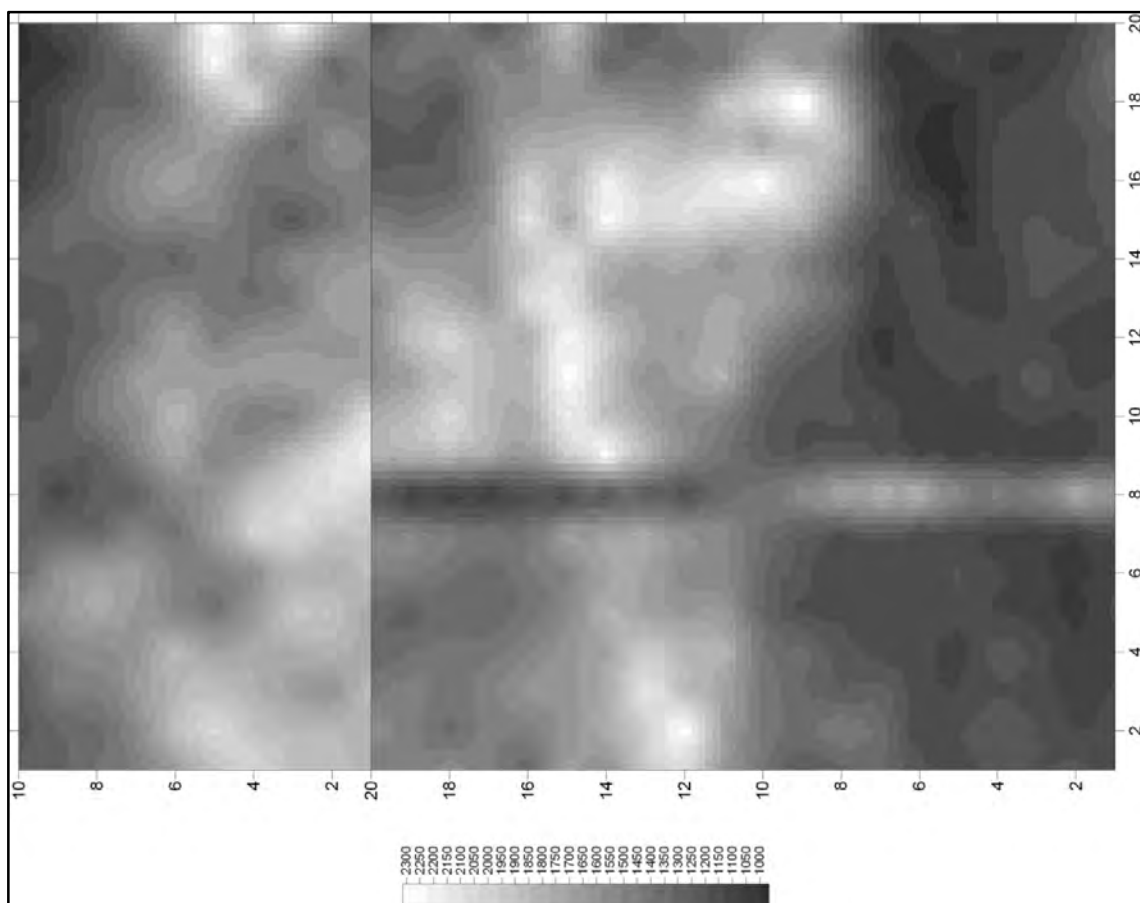


Fig 17: The results of the Cinder Hill Farm resistivity survey in 2008. Internal walls of the farmhouse show as linear white areas.

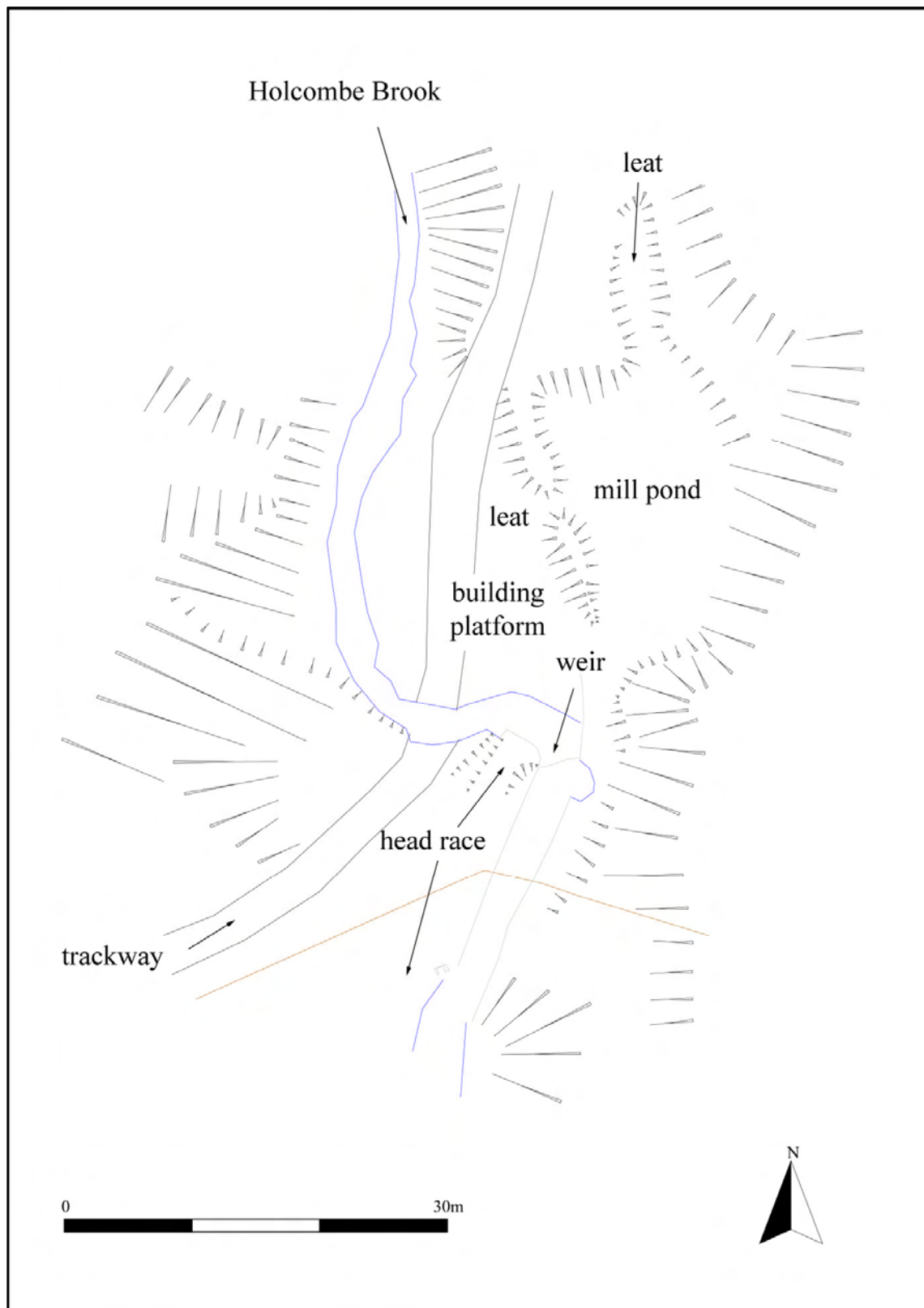
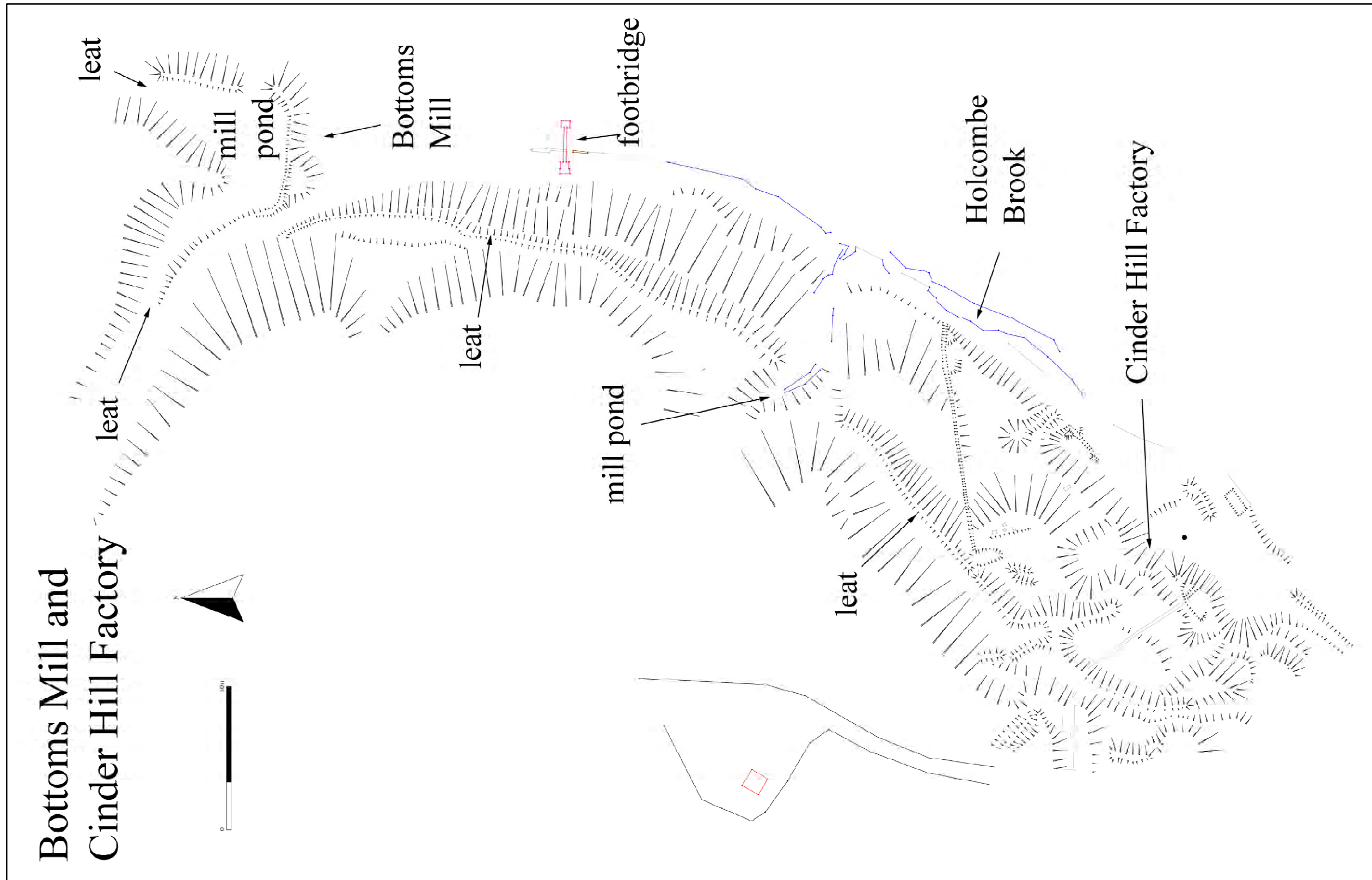


Fig 18: A potential lost mill site to the north of Bottoms Mill. Note the mill pond and leats on the eastern side of Holcombe Brook. South of this is a weir and head race leading to Bottoms Mill.

Fig 19: The earthwork survey of Bottoms Mill and Cinder Hill factory showing the complex leat and reservoir system.



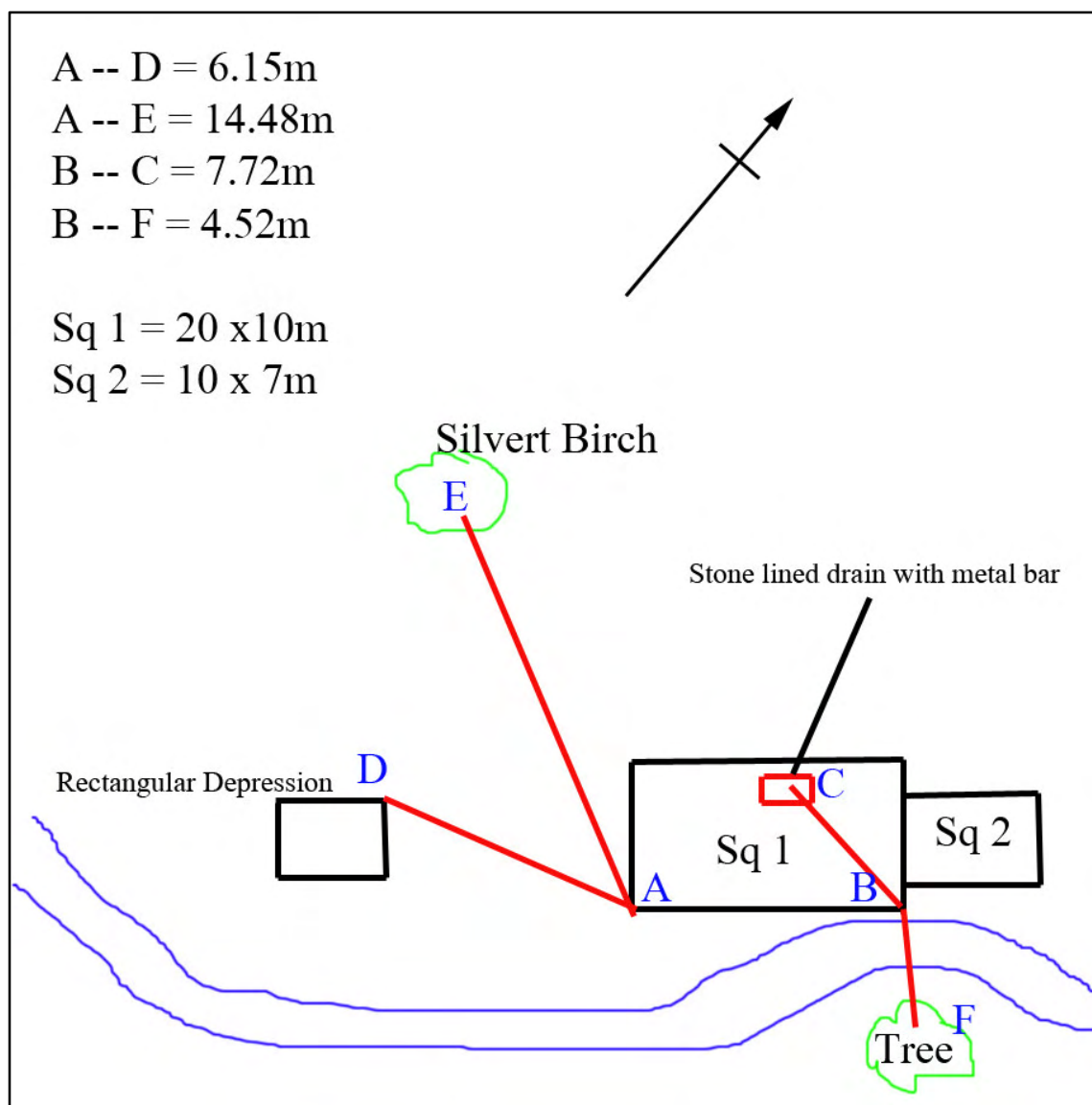


Fig 20: The location of the resistivity survey at Cinder Hill Factory.

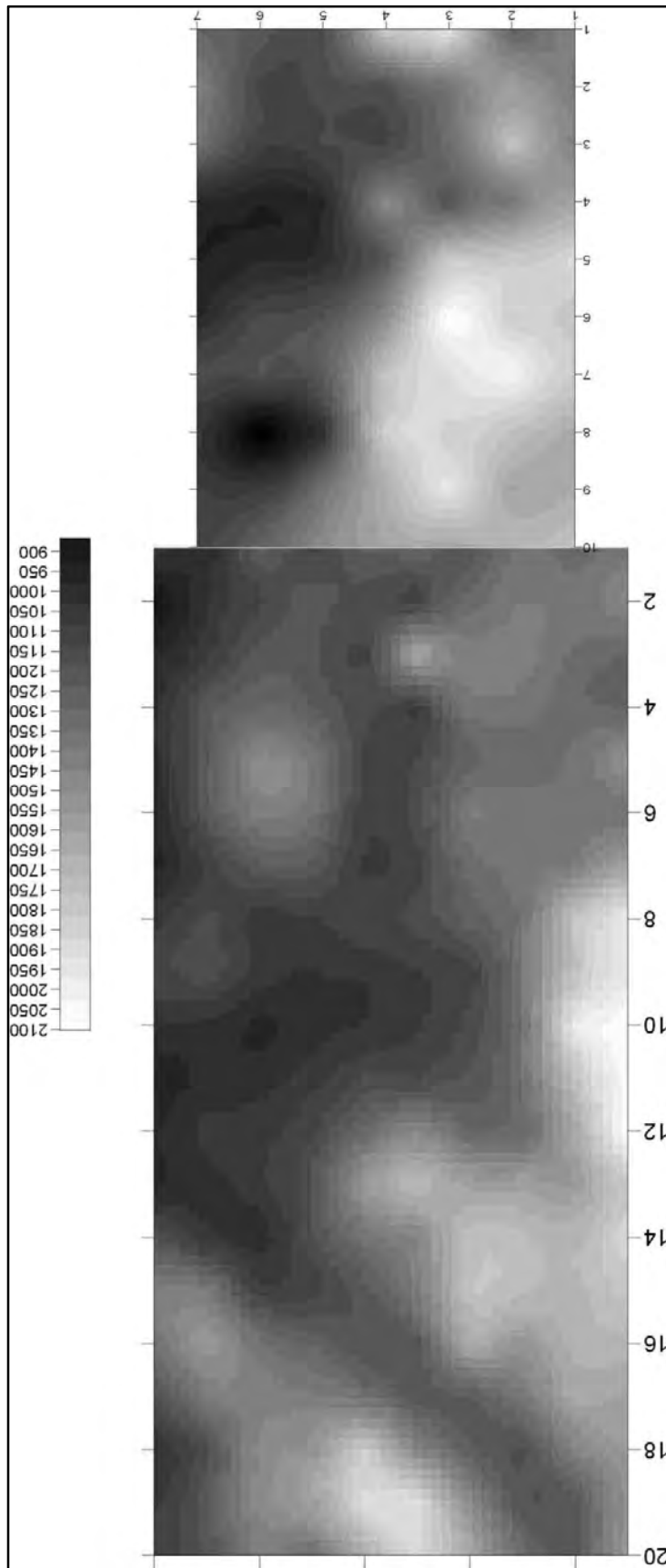


Fig 21: The resistivity survey of Cinder Hill Factory.